



INTEGRATED STIMULUS PACKAGE TO IMPROVE RESILIENCE (INSPIRE)

THIRD QUARTER REPORT (April 2014- June 2014)

Applicant Organization Name: Mercy Corps	
Headquarters Contact Information Contact Person: Steve Zodrow Title: Senior Program Officer Address: 45 SW Ankeny Street Portland, OR 97204 Telephone: +1 503 896 5729 Email: szodrow@mercy Corps.org	Field Contact Information Contact Person: Mohammed Qazilbash Title: Country Director, South Sudan Address: Tomping, Juba Juba, South Sudan Telephone: +211 914 393 102 Email: mqazibash@field.mercy Corps.org
Program Summary Award No: AID-OFDA-G-14-00002 Start Date: November 1, 2013 End Date: October 31, 2015 Report Date: July 31, 2014	



Beneficiaries from Mabok at a seed fair north of River Kiir June 2014

Overview of implementation period

During the period under review, unlike the previous quarter of INSPIRE program implementation, relative peace has been observed in Abyei Administrative Area (AAA) while Unity State continued to be fragile and insecure. After a relatively peaceful period since December 15th in Unity State, fighting erupted towards the end of April 2014 displacing the small population that had returned. This has increased the number of people displaced from 240,800 to 259,000 in Unity and 2,600 to 6,700 IDPs in AAA during the reporting period. In Bentiu the capital of Unity State, people still stay in protection of civilian (PoC) areas with the humanitarian situation extremely severe and needs huge.

On a good note, Abyei Administration Area has been calm and peaceful and is a safe haven for IDPs from Unity because it has not been greatly affected by unrest. Nonetheless, there are pockets of unrest and tension especially between Sudan and South while Misseriya communities offer yet another threat for the population north of River Kiir. Isolated cases of people attacked and killed have been reported which resulted in a demonstration in Abyei town on the 18th of June 2014 to show their dissatisfaction to UNSFA.

The rainy season started during the period under review which has allowed the population in AAA to start planting staple crops. However, with many people from Unity State leaving as IDPs in different areas, this has impacted their involvement in productive agriculture. This will therefore have a far reaching impact on food security outlook for the IDPs in the short and long term.

For INSPIRE program, this has had a profound effect on both the AFS and ERMS components of the program in Unity State where activities have not been implemented due to unrest.

Programmatically, due to insecurity, the program has mainly been implemented in AAA. Implementation of program activities: cash based, seeds and tools, and VSLA continued smoothly during the period under review, details are highlighted below.

1.1 IMPROVING AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION/FOOD SECURITY

1.1.1. Selection, Identification and registration of 2,000 HHs in AAA and Unity

As reported during the previous quarter, all cash transfer beneficiaries (250 households) for AAA were already identified and majority of cash for work households. Working through village committees and chiefs, the INSPIRE team identified more households to work on different cash for work projects in AAA. This has been affected by the crisis in Unity State without any cash for work beneficiary identified at this stage.

1.1.2. Entrepreneurship support to thirty traders (20 seed venders and 10 blacksmiths) in business growth and technical knowledge

As reported previously, in AAA no trader met the criteria for the input dealers support as most of the vendors didn't engage in agricultural inputs (seeds) trading permanently but only occasionally when there is an opportunity from INGOs. This has hampered the team from advancing grants to such vendors

who may not live beyond the program life. Likewise most of the blacksmiths that supplied the farming community in Abyei with local tools (malodas) came from neighboring Warrap and Northern Bahr el Ghazal who didn't have a place in AAA. However, the INSPIRE team worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and Relief Rehabilitation Commission (RRC) to select the Farmers Union to avail seeds during the seed fair. Furthermore, blacksmiths from neighboring areas were invited to provide tools during the seed fair. However, working with the Ministry of Agriculture the program is widening the scope to markets in the neighboring Twic County with vendors and traders that can support the market in AAA with possibility of support to such blacksmith.

1.1.3. Re-constitution of agricultural assets (seeds and tools) for 1,500 households in Unity and AAA through Agro Seed Fairs and animal assets (goats) to 500 households in Unity and AAA

As highlighted in 1.1.2, working with the Ministry of Agriculture and RRC, Mercy Corps identified potential suppliers and blacksmiths to supply seeds and tools during the seed fair. Seeds were tested by the Ministry and MOUs were signed between Mercy Corps and the vendors. Through a seed fair system, 750 households each received two malwas of sorghum seeds (6Kgs) and one maloda tool. Seed fairs were conducted in central locations close to beneficiaries to ensure easy access and reduce walking time by vulnerable beneficiaries to obtain inputs. Due to the insecurity in Unity State, this has only been possible in AAA.

1.1.4. Agronomy and agro forestry training for 100 lead farmers in AAA and Unity State

Mercy Corps INSPIRE team identified 50 lead farmers in AAA north of the river for agronomy and agro-forestry training. Working with the Secretariat of Agriculture Animal Resources and Fisheries (SAARF), Mercy Corps AFS team together with extension workers from SAARF organized two 2-day practical agronomy and agro forestry trainings covering topics on: line planting, IPM, timely planting, weed management, intercropping and tree planting. Conducting the training together with SAARF has initiated a sense of ownership from the side of government and enabled beneficiaries to identify with their extension workers.

1.1.5. Tree nursery and horticulture cash grants (co-investments) to thirty producers/ groups (15 AAA, 15 Unity)

This activity has been temporary halted pending final decision on the modification to this grant.

ECONOMIC RECOVERY AND MARKET SYSTEMS

2.1. TEMPORARY EMPLOYMENT

2.1.2. Cash Transfer for 500 most vulnerable households at US\$ 40 per household per month for four months in Unity State and AAA

As highlighted from the previous reporting period with cash transfers, this activity continued with the second cash transfer covering 500 households each receiving 128 SSP (40 USD). Furthermore, the third transfer was completed while the fourth transfer is still underway. However, unlike the first two

transfers that covered 500 households (250 from AAA and 250 from Unity) during the third transfer most of the households from Unity State that were staying in AAA were found to have moved back to their areas of origin. Furthermore, through consultations with other stakeholders, it was observed that continued cash transfer to Unity State beneficiaries in AAA may become a pulling factor stopping them from moving back to their homes even if they are safe and secure.

2.1.3. 1,500 households participate in 20 cash for work projects for a period of 4 months in AAA and Unity State (3-5 CFW projects will be started in February while monitoring of the markets continues)

Cash for work was intensified during the reporting period with an additional 536 households identified to work on eight cash for work projects. This has brought the total number of households employed on different CFW projects to 786 households plus the 500 CT recipients mentioned above, totaling 1286. Furthermore, a total of nine CFW projects have so far been either completed with the remaining two projects nearing final stages of completion. A total of 623 households have so far each been paid a total of 550 SSP (USD 172) after working for 22 days. This has not been possible in Unity State due to the crisis. This has come at such a critical time which is according to the seasonal calendar is the peak of the hunger gap where 65% of the households rely on markets for food.

2.2. LIVELIHOODS RESTORATION

2.2.1. 2-day business training modules for 80 businesses on ‘Start and Improve Your Own Business’ across the AAA and Unity State

Mercy Corps has trained 15 traders who will receive trader grants for bulky procurement of food basket items. The topics that were covered included: marketing, stock control, procurement procedures, recording operating expenses, business planning, people and productivity as well as pricing and costing. Through these trainings traders who will receive cash grants were equipped with skills on how to use the money to be received under 2.2.2.

2.2.2. Entrepreneurship support to thirty traders for bulk procurement in AAA and Unity State

As highlighted above, with traders already trained, Mercy Corps plans to provide grants for bulky purchase within the next reporting period. This is only limited to AAA with Unity State still remains insecure.

2.2.3. Enable livelihoods skills development for thirty youth through apprenticeships

With the proposed modification to the current grant, this activity may be halted up to the second year.

2.4. MICROFINANCE

2.4.1. Mobilize the formation of 60 VSLA groups of approximately 25 members each, in Unity State and the AAA

During the reporting period, 12 new groups have been mobilized in AAA as more money was availed within the population through CFW payment. Related to ERMS component, the continued engagement of households on CFW has enabled them to start VSLA groups.

2.4.2. Provide initial 3-day training per group and VSLA materials

Out of the 12 groups mobilized, eight have been trained which bring to a total of 23 VSLA groups currently saving in AAA with a total of 521 members. During the trainings, members came up with their own constitution, elected their leaders (Chairperson, Treasurer and Secretary) and agreed on the share value, loaning dynamics in relation to share capital, repayment, and social fund which were all incorporated in the constitution. Mercy Corps provided the eight groups who completed the training with VSLA materials, and all groups have commenced their savings for the first loan cycle. Provision of VSL materials will continue in the next reporting period.

2.4.3. Data collection and follow up

This is a routine part of the VSLA team where Mercy Corps staff assist the groups especially in infancy to stabilize. Groups are visited to provide refresher training and monitor their savings and loans on a regular basis. Furthermore, Mercy Corps supports older groups during share out of VSLA dividends earned in 2013 under the OFDA funded ECAP.

Across the 23 new groups so far, 17,170 SSP (USD 5365) has been saved and loaned within members with a net social fund of 1374 SSP (USD 429).

CONCLUSION

Generally from the slow onset of the program implementation in both Unity and AAA, the period under review has registered considerable progress especially in AAA. In Unity State however, insecurity has not allowed Mercy Corps to break through into full scale implementation. Nevertheless, as IDPs start to return to their original homes which have been burnt down, there is dire need for shelter and support with NFIs. Mercy Corps has submitted a modification request to USAID OFDA to enable the current grant to provide emergency assistance to at risk vulnerable households. The modification will allow Mercy Corps and other partner's efforts to curb the dire humanitarian situation among returning IDPs. On the other hand in AAA, the rainy season has started and households have planted seeds they received. Some flooding has been experienced in areas north of the river, but it is not alarming. Annet market which supplies most of the community in AAA is vibrant with most of the household items. With the peak of the huge gap, Mercy Corps' cash based activities will enable households with off farm employment hence increased purchasing power at such a time when they rely on the market for food. As the rainy season intensifies, logistical movement and overall implementation of most activities will be interfered with however, Mercy Corps will ensure key activities are not affected.

Mercy Corps continues to monitor the security situation in Unity State to start implementation. Furthermore, once the modification that has been submitted is approved, Mercy Corps will include lifesaving and emergency components within the program to cater to the deteriorating humanitarian situation in Unity State.